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Home Management in Africa

by Mary Ellen Lynch

DOWN in the Orange Free State in the Union of South Africa an Iowa State graduate in foods and nutrition has organized a home management school. She is Marie Vermeulen, who returned to South Africa from Iowa State College in 1933 and battled unsympathetic committees and school boards to start a school for training girls of high school age how to run a home and care for children.

Miss Vermeulen started out in a little cottage with 14 students. She taught



them hygiene, meal planning, marketing, cookery, home care and management. During her first year she received her salary from a memorial fund, so she was not considered a member of the regular school staff. Consequently, her pupils had to take three courses outside of the ones she taught in order to be on the school roll.

Miss Vermeulen met committees, ran bazaars and sponsored all kinds of outside work in order to increase the school funds, since most of the difficulties were due to lack of money.

The pupils in the school are of high school age. They have had no prerequisites to the home management course, so they remain in training for two years. They have a real baby, just as Iowa State women have in the home management houses. His name happened to be William so they lengthened it to the appropriate title "William of Orange."

In a letter to Dr. P. Mabel Nelson, head of the Foods and Nutrition Department, Miss Vermeulen described some of the holidays celebrated in South Africa. She says they have many of them during the year. Some of them correspond to the American holidays of Good Friday, Easter Monday, Ascension Day and the Fourth of July, which is called Union Day in South Africa. Dingaan's Day has the same significance as our Thanksgiving Day, and, of course, they celebrate Christmas and New Year's Day as Americans do.

The longest school vacation is in the summer, which is during the so-called winter months here. School closes around December 12, and everyone begins to prepare for Dingaan's Day on December 16. For this holiday most

people camp out in some attractive spot, usually on the bank of a river edged with mimosa and eucalytus trees.

The day is the celebration of a victory of about 200 white people over thousands of Kaffirs, native savages, in 1836. Today, the white people re-enact this victory by dressing somewhat in the fashion of 1836 and by camping out in wagons arranged in circles as if for protection. Everyone takes great quantities of food—apricots, early peaches, corn on the cob, vegetables, fried chicken, roast lamb and sausages.

Each family has a little Kaffir girl to wash the dishes and attend to odd jobs. Since it is summer, everyone gets thirsty often. Besides the coffee at breakfast and at 4 p. m., one can drink quantities of pineapple lemonade or homemade ginger beer from wooden vats.

The week after the big Dingaan's Day celebration comes Christmas, which is a time for the family to be together in a quiet, solemn spirit. On Christmas morning all the Kaffirs come to the homes

for a Christmas box and then go on their way to their Kaffir beer parties.

Christmas breakfast means several kinds of fruit scones, grilled breast of lamb and coffee. The noon meal is the main one with chicken or roast lamb. The lamb has to be very young with the legs and the breast roasted. There are several vegetables and desserts, of which the most important is plum pudding.

New Year's is the day for all friends to get together. The night before is spent in dancing and games. Then most families go on picnics on New Year's Day, starting early in the morning before breakfast and spending the day in playing, resting and eating.

Miss Eunice Phoebe Grewar, Child Development graduate, is on the Iowa State campus to study for two years. She will return to her native country of South Africa to help Miss Vermeulen carry on and enlarge the home management school at Bloemfontein, Orange Free State.

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